

AN APOLOGY FOR ESAU.

A SERMON,

PREACHED

IN THE PARISH CHURCH

OF

ST. ANDREW, PLYMOUTH,

AT THE

ARCHDEACON'S VISITATION,

MAY 21, 1790,

B.Y.

THOMAS ALCOCK, A. M.

VICAR OF RUNCORN, IN CHESHIRE.

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The Plymouth Printer had no Greek or Hebrew Types. The Learned Reader is therefore requested to insert with his Pen the original Words in their proper Places.

GENESIS, XXVII. 38.

*And Esau said unto his Father, hast thou but
one Blessing! Bless me, even me also, O my
Father! And Esau lift up his voice and wept.*

ESAU has generally been set forth both by Jews and Christians, as a profane ungodly man, and reprobated by God, and as an object of our contempt and abhorrence. But I can find no real ground in Scripture for such a mark of reproach. And I shall at present endeavour to rescue his character from the obloquy, that has been thrown upon it, and to represent it in a truer light. It may seem extraordinary, that an Apologist for Esau should start up at this age of the world, after a course of more than three thousand six hundred years. But it is never too late to

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establish

establish truth, and detect errors and prejudices; especially when such detection may serve the interests of Religion and Morality. That the Jews should be prejudiced against Esau and his Descendants, is no wonder. Their Father Jacob had obtained the birth-right, all the rights of primogeniture, and the blessing, in preference of Esau the elder brother, by ways not the most honorable or justifiable. And as a man that has done an injury to another, is always jealous of the injured party, and thinks him a secret enemy; so Jacob suspected Esau, and the Israelites were jealous of the Edomites, and feared that they wanted only an opportunity to dispossess them of their Country, and recover all the lost rights of their Father Esau. And the Edomites, banished as they were, and confined to the rocky limits of Mount Seir, could not help casting a longing eye on the fertile vales of Canaan, and envying the Israelites the possession of a country, which they thought was the natural right of their Father and Founder, Esau. On

* And both Jews and Christians, highly venerating the Patriarchal Line, from which the former believed their Messiah was to descend, and the latter that he had descended, of course became unfriendly to the character of Esau, the unsuccessful Competitor for the Blessing, who had breathed out Slaughter against his Brother on the disappointment.

On reading the transaction recorded in this XXVIIth chapter of Genesis, and the means made use of to obtain the blessing for Jacob, my mind has always been much dissatisfied with the conduct of Rebecca and Jacob, and more especially with that of Rebecca. According to the principles of Morality and Christianity, it may seem a solecism in Religion, to go to seek a blessing in a way that should rather produce a curse, to mix deceit, imposition, and falsity in a scheme to prevail on the aged, the blind, and feeble Isaac, to transfer the blessing from his eldest son to the youngest, contrary to his own natural affection, *for Isaac loved Esau*; contrary to the rules of succession, and the customary rights of primogeniture. Rebecca's predilection for Jacob, her setting up her younger son in opposition to the interests of the elder, and using such intriguing arts to gain her purposes, shew a very blamable partiality in a parent; who ought to be equally affected to all the children, and not discourage one, by making a favorite of another; and in the present case
was

was the way to set the two brothers at perpetual variance, and bring on the murder of one or other of them, if not of both ; of which Rebecca herself was very soon apprehensive.

Be it, that the oracle of God had said to her, *the elder shall serve the younger* ; she had no call to take upon her the accomplishment of the oracle, at least by such unkind, unjustifiable means. God could have brought about the event without her over-solicitous interference, although, after she had entered upon her scheme, he permitted it to succeed. At the moment that Isaac was going to give the blessing to Esau, God could have impressed his heart with a conviction, that he ought to transfer it to Jacob ; just, as at the instant, after he had transferred the blessing, he was convinced that it was rightly done.

It came to pass, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him ; behold now

*now I am old, I know not the day of my death ;
 I feel many infirmities and decay coming upon me ;
 I know not how soon I may die. Take, I pray
 thee, thy weapons, thy quiver, and thy bow,
 and go out to the field, and take me some Ve-
 nison ; and make me savoury meat, such as I
 love ; and bring it unto me, that my soul may
 bless thee, before I die.* And Rebecca heard
 when Isaac spake to Esau his son. Isaac,
 now in continual expectation of his death,
 was desirous, like a prudent and good Father,
 to take his solemn leave of his children, and
 to settle both his temporal and spiritual af-
 fairs, and particularly that *great affair* rela-
 tive to the succession of the blessing which
 God promised to Abraham and Isaac ;* and
 which Isaac, as heir to that promise, and as
 Priest and Patriarch in his Family, had a
 right, under God, now to transfer by his
 last solemn benediction. *Take, I pray thee,*
thy weapons, thy quiver, and thy bow, and
take me some Venison : Esau, it is said, was a
cunning

* Gen. XXI. XXII.

cunning hunter, and a man of the field. But Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.‡ Esau therefore was the proper person to be applied to for Venison, as being expert in the sports of the field ; as being an excellent marksman ; active in pursuit of his game ; bold and fierce in the destruction of it. His constitution and temperament disposed him to this way of life. He was born with hair all over his body, and therefore was called

Hasau, that is Factus, perfectus, made or perfected, born a man, having the hair of a man in infancy, which in others is a token of manhood.

Now hairiness naturally denotes strength and courage ; and the manly exercise of hunting did still more invigorate and strengthen his constitution. Hunting was not undertaken in those days chiefly as an exercise and diversion, but as a necessary means of subsistence, as it is at this day among most

of

‡ Gen. XXV.

of the Indian and Savage Nations, who draw from the game of the field, the principal support of life.*

Efau, who loved, and was beloved by Isaac,

* The Chace is the mean support of life in the first, and savage state of man, the carcases affording meat, and the skins cloathing. The pastoral life succeeds in the second stage, and agriculture prevails in the third state of man, a state of high civilization.—There was a plenty of game in the countries that Efau ranged over, the Wilderness of Beer-sheba, and the Mountains of Seir, bordering on Arabia Petræ; such as wild Goats and Kids, the wild Boar, the Roebuck, Hares, Rabbits, Foxes: and a kind of Quail, like a small Partridge, particularly abounded in those parts. It was in Seir, a country situated on the South and South-East of Judea, that Efau occasionally fixed his residence, chiefly for the convenience of hunting. From the redness of the Mess of Pottage, for which he sold his birth-right, he was afterwards called *Edom*. *Edom*, in the Hebrew, signifying *Red*; and the country from him, who was a Prince and Sovereign there, was called *Edom*. Some of the sources of the Red Sea are said to rise in the Mountains of Seir, the Country of *Edom*. And that Sea, ancient authors tell us, was called *Red*, from a King *Erythras*, whose name in Greek, signifies Red, who reigned in this district, and is therefore supposed to be the same as Efau or *Edom*.

Isaac, with pleasure complied with his Father's request. He had frequently done the same thing for his Father ; had caught game, and made him savoury meat, such as he loved, such as agreed with an old man's appetite, which is seldom very good, which requires some niceties, and well flavoured dainties, such as are palatable, nourishing, light and easy of digestion. Isaac, it is said, loved Esau. Fathers have commonly a more than ordinary respect for their first-born. The first-born gives the greatest joy, as his birth is the first fruits, is an earnest of the future increase and continuance of the family. The first-born too, being the first grown up, first becomes a useful friend, a companion, and an early assistant to an aged Parent, by his advice, activity, and management in the family. He becomes the staff of old age. The Father still more values him, as he is to bear his name and title, and continue to dwell upon the inheritances of his Fathers. The Father thinks he lives, and is perpetuated in the first-born, and his offspring. As Isaac loved

loved Esau, so Esau loved Isaac. His readiness at all Times to take the game of the Field, and even condescend to dress it for him, and feed him, sufficiently proved his affection. And his care and tenderness, and dutiful expressions, shew his affection still more. *Let my Father arise*, says he, in the most humble respectful language; *Let my Father now arise, and let him eat of his Sons Venison.*

Persons of high rank and fortune, even Princes, their sons and daughters were not in those days of pastoral simplicity, above killing their own meat, and dressing it, baking their own bread, drawing water from the wells, and doing any domestic offices in the family, as you may see by the examples of Abraham and Sarah, of Rebecca, of Esau here, and others, whose primitive manners were just the same, as were those of persons of the same high rank described by Homer in his *Odyssey*.

Isaac

Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his Venison. He eat the mess with a higher relish and double pleasure, because of the hand that caught, and dressed it. Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his son's venison; but not surely on this account only, because of his belly; but for other reasons now mentioned, and because the procuring him the game of the field, with so much labour and fatigue, often with danger of his health, from the violence of the exercise, in a hot climate; (for he returned from the field sometimes so much spent and exhausted, that he became faint, and thought he should die, and in such a situation he sold his birthright to his younger Brother, for a morsel of immediate refreshment; sold it in a hasty moment, when he thought he should receive no benefit from it, that death would soon deprive him of it;) I say, Isaac loved Esau, not merely because he did eat of his Venison, but because the procuring him the game of the field with so much labour and fatigue, often with danger of his health from the violence

lence of the exercise, and with danger of his life from the assaults of wild Beasts, the Lion, the Bear, and the Tiger; because all this shewed very great duty and affection to his Father. But Rebecca loved Jacob, as being always at home with her; as being of a milder and more domestic turn, and perhaps as having, as she believed, the Blessing of the Family already entailed upon him by God, whom she had consulted on that uncommon struggle in her womb, between the Twin Brothers, and from whom she had received for answer, *that the Elder should serve the Younger.**)

The
This partiality of Rebecca for her younger Son, Jacob, on the common principles of social and parental duty, was utterly inexcusable, and might have proved the ruin of both her sons, and the destruction of her house, if the Providence of God had not interposed, and ordered events otherwise. Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged, says St. Paul, iii. Coloss. It is true,

* Genesis XXV.

true, to love or hate is not always in our power. Perhaps parents cannot help loving one child more than another. But then they can help shewing such very partial tokens of affection: They ought, as much as possible, to conceal all difference of respect, behave with tenderness and justice to all; more especially not shew continual acts of kindness to one, and coldness and discouragement to the other, by secret arts turn the Inheritance out of the right line, make the younger Brother a Fondling, and the elder a Castaway.

Rebecca, always attentive to the interests of her favourite Son, Jacob, overheard Isaac, when he desired his Son Esau to get him some savoury meat, that his soul might bless him before he died. When the feeble Isaac's spirits were raised by the refreshments of meat and wine, and his heart overflowed with joy at these cheering acts of kindness in his Son, Esau, he was in the properest mood to pour forth his last solemn benediction upon him. So the Prophet Elisha, before

fore he could exert a prophetic spirit, cried,
Bring me a Minstrel. And it came to pass,*
when the Minstrel played, the hand of the Lord
came upon him. The Minstrel mellowed him
 into a proper temper of Inspiration. Re-
 becca finding that it was not now an ordi-
 nary common Blessing of a Father to a Son,
 but that great, that solemn prophetic Bene-
 diction of a dying Patriarch to his Son, name-
 ly, the entail of that great Blessedness pro-
 mised by God to the Seed of Abraham, that
 was now going to be conferred on Esau, im-
 mediately formed a scheme to defeat the in-
 tentions of both Father and Son, and by
 blinding her already poor blind Husband, pro-
 cure the Blessing for Jacob. Female strata-
 gem hath often been celebrated, and here we
 have an early and successful instance of it.
 Rebecea was not more quick at invention,
 than dextrous in the execution. Immediately
 communicating what she had overheard to
 her Son Jacob, she told him, she had con-
 trived

* II. Kings, III.

strived a method how to impose upon Isaac, and set aside the Blessing of Esau. Go now quickly to the Flock, and fetch me two young Kids, and I will make of them savoury meat for thy Father. And thou shalt bring it to him, that he may eat, and bless thee before his death. To this Jacob very properly and honestly replied; “ Esau is an hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My Father probably will feel me, and discover the imposition, and I shall seem to him a deceiver, and thereby shall bring a Curse upon me, and not a Blessing.” On me be thy Curse, replies the Mother, only obey my voice, and go and fetch me them. Although Rebecca, by such an imprecation, takes all the evil on herself, yet this doth not exculpate Jacob. He was now more than forty years of age, could sufficiently discern between good and evil: And no one’s commands or persuasions, or saying, they will be answerable for all the guilt, should prevail upon us to be the instruments of executing their unlawful purposes. Rebecca however in this case might, perhaps, think she was doing

doing nothing amiss ; and that in endeavouring to transfer the Blessing from Esau to Jacob, she was only fulfilling the Divine Oracle, which had pronounced before their birth ; *the elder shall serve the younger.** Full of this persuasion herself, she might the more easily instill the same notion into Jacob, as he was to receive all the benefit of the contrivance ; and, having already purchased the Birth-right, might think that of little consequence without the great Blessing to attend it ; and might be apt at that age of life to flatter himself with ambitious prospects of power and greatness, of superiority over his brother, of dominion and universal sovereignty over the earth.

Jacob therefore went and fetched the Kids, and brought them to his Mother, and she quickly prepared them, and made a relishing dish, such as she knew would be agreeable to the taste of her aged, ~~her blind, and bed-~~ lying Husband, and gave it to Jacob, to carry to him. At the same time she had the

precaution

* Genesis XXV.

precaution to take goodly raiment of her eldest Son's, which was laid up in the wardrobe, a sacerdotal Robe of State, highly perfumed, and worn by Esau on Festivals and other public occasions, as eldest Son and Priest of the Family, and proper to be worn before God and the Patriarch on this solemn religious occasion, to do honour to the office, and for a *sweet smelling savour*. She likewise put the skins of the Kids upon his hands and neck, that they might feel hairy to the touch, like those of Esau. Thus furnished and instructed by his Mother, he hastened to his Father, and saluted him, saying, 'my Father.' And Isaac answered, 'Here am I, blind, confined, and wearied. Who art thou, my Son?' And Jacob said, 'I am Esau, thy first-born. I have done as thou badeſt me. Arife, I pray thee, ſit up, and eat of my Veniſon, that thy Soul may bless me.' When a man takes upon him to personate another's character, and engages in ſome project of fraud or impoſition, he is not at firſt aware of what diſſiculties he may be drawn into, and what falſehoods

hoods he must utter, to be consistent in his story, and bring the matter to the intended issue, without being detected. Jacob would have been staggered, and would hardly have entered on this affair, if he had been foretold, or could have foreseen how many questions his Father would put to him, and how many frauds and falsities he must be guilty of, to carry on the imposture, and not betray the cause in hand. But the Father's examination being very strict and particular, the Son is gradually drawn on to confirm one falsehood by another, and is forced at last to go through a shocking series of lies, if not perjuries. To the first question, *Who art thou*, he very readily answers, *I am Esau, thy first-born*; though he was neither Esau, nor the first-born: *I have done as thou badeſt me*; though Isaac had not bidden him to do any thing. But there was a farther deception intended here. Isaac might conclude it must be Esau, because Jacob appeared to know what had passed between him and Esau.— The voice of Brothers is often pretty much

C alike;

alike; and Jacob, no doubt, imitated that of his Brother as much as he could. But notwithstanding this, and Jacob's bold affirmation, that he was Esau, and that he had brought the Venison as Isaac had bidden him, Isaac suspected his voice. This suspicion was further increased by the Venison being brought so soon. Rebecca had over-acted her part, and in order to be before-hand with Esau, had made too much haste, and provided the meat of Venison sooner than it could be reasonably expected. Game generally lies at some distance from Tents and Dwellings, is not always to be found, when sought after, and when found, the Sportsman is not always lucky enough to take it. Isaac therefore asked Jacob, *How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my Son?* He said, *Because the Lord thy God, brought it to me.* Good men ascribed every benefit or success to the Lord. Even what he caught in hunting was deemed God's Blessing. The Heathens had also this notion. *Venatio nobis bae, amici*, says Cyrus to his Friends.*

* Cyroped. L. 2.

Volante Deo, Prospera futura est. — This, our Hunt, my friends, will be successful, if God shall prosper us. I have found it so quickly, because the Lord thy God brought it to me.)

Here was another falsity, and God is made a party to it. Still this plausible and religious invention did not satisfy Isaac. His suspicions of deceit rather grew stronger; and therefore he wanted some further sensible proof. He very well knew the hairy skin of Esau, and the smooth skin of Jacob. He desired therefore to feel and handle Jacob, to try if he corresponded to that criterion.— Rebecca, foreseeing this means of discovery, had provided against it, by affixing the hairy skins of the Kids on Jacob's hands and neck. But even this did not convince Isaac. One sense contradicted another; the sense of hearing, that of feeling. ‘The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands feel like the hands of Esau.’ Still therefore mistrustful of some trick or imposition; he once more puts the question

question home to Jacob, and asked him in the most solemn manner; *Art thou my very Son, Esau?* And he said, *I am.* Such simulation, equivocation, and falsehood, are utterly inexcusable, and contrary to all the principles both of natural and revealed religion. The morality however of those times was not so nice and strict, as moral and Christian writers have since shewn it ought to be. Some of the best characters in the Old Testament, scruple not to make some small breaches of morality, to tell some fibs, or commit some pious frauds, in order to accomplish some good End, or make excuses for some imputed fault. Abraham prevaricated somewhat in calling Sarah his Sister, though a first cousin might be included in the word Sister, in the Hebrew language; And Isaac did the same on a like occasion.

Sarah laughed to scorn the Angel's message, *That she should have a Son in her old age.* And afterwards, on the Angel's blaming her, flatly denied that she did laugh. *For she was afraid*

to

to be thought to have been wanting in faith and respect. Rachel stole the Teraphim, Lares, the household Gods or Images of Laban, and under a false pretence, eluded her Father's search. Not to mention that this sacrilegious stealth shewed somewhat of Idolatry, or superstitious disposition.

Jael's killing Sisera, in breach of promise of protection, would be condemned in those days as a breach of hospitality, and the laws of war. These are spots in these bright characters, failings, which we ought to avoid. The Gospel condemns all lying, falsehood, and disingenous proceedings. *Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ** St. Paul saith, *We must not do evil, that good may come* † No good end will justify bad means. Both the means and end must be good to make the action good. We must not take upon us to fulfill God's promises by transgressing his laws.)

When Jacob had again most solemnly affirmed

* John I. — † Romans III.

affirmed to his Father, that he was his very Son Esau, Isaac said, *Come near to me now, my Son, and kiss me.* And he came near to him, and kissed him, dressed in Esau's perfumed Robe of State, as proper to be worn on this solemn occasion. Isaac, cheared with the fragrant odor of the sweet smelling garment, and mellowed down into a happy composure of spirits, by the cordial refreshments of venison and wine, being full of the Divine afflatus, now burst out into prophetic language, and catching the idea from the perfumed Robe, said, *See, the smell of my Son, is as the smell of a Field, which the Lord hath blessed.* The Fields in this part of the Country, the South of Canaan, abound with odoriferous plants and shrubs. *See, the smell of my Son, is as the smell of a Field, which the Lord hath blessed.* Therefore God give thee, or God shall give thee,* of the Dew of Heaven, and the fatness of the Earth, and plenty of Corn and Wine. Let people serve thee, and

* It is

Jitten shall give, in the Hebrew.

and Nations bow down to thee. Be Lord over thy Brethren; and let thy Mother's Son bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee; and blessed be he, that blesseth thee.

(The Dew of heaven is very great in hot climates, and in some sort answers the purpose of Rain; and containing also a nitrous or fructifying quality, produces fatness and fertility of Earth, with plenty of Corn and Wine.)

*The Dew of Heaven, therefore, and the Fatness of the Earth, is only a metaphorical description of that good Land, the Land of Canaan, which the Lord had promised to Abraham, and his seed after him, which was the glory of all Lands, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey; a Land of Brooks, of Water, of Fountains and Depths; a Land of Wheat and Barley, of Vines and Fig-trees, and Oil Olive, wherein thou shalt eat Bread without scarceness.**

And

* Deuter. VIII.

And as Land without Liberty and Power is an imperfect gift ; together with such a Land, Isaac gives him also dominion and sovereignty. *Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee ;* the several people, and nations on the east and west side of Jordan, all the kingdoms of Canaan. With superiority over the nations abroad, he makes him Lord also of his own Family at home. *Be Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Son bow down to thee.* That is, the Edomites, the posterity of his Mother's other Son. This was actually accomplished by King David. It is particularly said, II. Samuel, viii. ‘ That David put garrisons throughout all Edom ; and all they of Edom became David's servants.’ So that as the Prophet Balaam also foretold : *Edom shall be a possession ; Seir also shall be a possession to his enemies, and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he, that shall have dominion.* ‡ This,

Cursed

Cursed is every one that curseth thee ; and blessed be he that blesseth thee ; This is but a repetition of what the Lord had before declared to Abraham. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and in thee shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed. In the ultimate and full sense, this Blessing was only accomplished in Jesus Christ, of the seed of Abraham. In him were all the Families or Tribes, not of Israel only, but of all the earth, Gentiles as well as Jews ; in him were all the Families of the Earth to be blessed. *And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**

Jacob was but just gone from the presence of his Father, when Esau returned from his hunting ; little thinking what in the mean time had been done against him. Esau, like a dutiful Son, had made all possible haste in taking the Venison. And having prepared

Gen. xii. — * Luke I.

it in a savoury manner, as he had frequently done before, he brought it to his Father, and in the most respectful terms said ; *Let my Father now arise, and let him eat of his Son's Venison, that thy soul may bless me.* And Isaac said unto him ; *Who art thou ;* and he said, *I am thy Son, thy First-born, Esau.* And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said in confused and broken language, *Who ? Where is he that hath taken Venison, and brought it to me ; and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him. Yea, and he shall be blessed.* Isaac at this time either had not been informed by Rebecca of what the Oracle had said to her, *that the elder should serve the younger,* or he did not understand it. For he certainly meant to give the Blessing to Esau. Isaac is full of confusion, of resentment, and horror, at the strange imposition, that had been put upon him. He was provoked, that those, in whom he thought he might most have confided, should take advantage of his blindness, his age, and infirmities, thus to deceive him. He was shocked, that they

they should attempt to obtain spiritual bennedictions by subtlety and falsehoods, by irreligious actions. He might fear, that such proceedings would provoke the wrath of God, and bring a Curse, and not a Blessing, on all his House. He was greatly concerned for the disappointment and injury done to his First-born, his beloved Son Esau. It grieved him, that this Son must be turned out as a wanderer, be deprived not only of the Birth-right, of all the rights of primogeniture, but now also of that great Family-Blessing, the whole land of Canaan, or the whole earth, promised by God to the seed of Abraham. He blames his own rashness, in being so hasty, when there were such grounds of suspicion; in being so hasty to give this great Blessing, without more duly considering the person to whom he was giving it.

On the other hand, he was now afraid he might have acted contrary to the will of Heaven, if he had pronounced the Blessing upon Esau. He now felt something within him,

him, which told him, that the Blessing, however unfairly obtained, was by him rightly bestowed. He now recollects, or understood, that the Oracle of God had declared, *The elder shall serve the younger.* He felt the Spirit of God acting upon him, when he uttered the Blessing. And although he should have scrupled to have given the Blessing to Jacob in preference to Esau, if he had known what he was doing, yet, *quod fieri non debuit, factum valebit, what ought not to have been done, shall be valid when done.* He approves and ratifies the thing now done, and not only saith, *I have blessed him,* but adds; *yea, and he shall be blessed.* And when Esau heard the words of his Father, particularly the last binding words, confirming the Blessing on Jacob, *Yea, and he shall be blessed;* he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his Father; *Bless me, even me also, O my Father!* Great grief naturally imgerminates or doubles its words; *Bless me, even me also, O my Father.* Esau very well knew what he had lost; that he had not only

ly lost his Birth-right, a double portion of his Father's substance, the Priesthood and Headship of the Family, which was only a temporal Blessing, but that spiritual, that divine, that great, that immortal Blessing, entailed by God on the house of Abraham, and promised again to the seed of Isaac. *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.* His grief was excessive for the loss of all this. He cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry; *Bless me, even me also, O my Father!* Who does not grieve here with the poor unfortunate Esau? Who does not think, he met with hard usage, and that he had sufficient cause for this lamentable and bitter cry? And Isaac said; *Thy Brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy Blessing.* *Thine it was by the right of primogeniture, and the customary laws of inheritance.* *Thine it was by my desire and intention, but thy Brother came with subtilty, during thy absence in the field, and hath taken away thy Blessing.* Esau quickly replied; *Is he not rightly named Jacob?* Carping at the word Jacob, and giving it a malicious

malicious meaning, out of vexation and disappointment.) For ~~the~~ Hacab, whence Jacob, in the future tense, signifies Calcem-tenuit, he took another by the heel. And the name was given to Jacob from the circumstance of his taking his brother by the heel at their birth.* But Jacob, in its primitive sense, signifying one that takes another by the heel, in a metaphorical sense, came to signify a supplanter, one that trips up another's heels, and gets himself into his place. And in this sense) Esau now very angrily saith, his Brother was rightly called Jacob, a Supplanter. His actions are suitable to his name. Such as his name, such is his nature. *He hath supplanted me these two times. He took away my birth-right, and now, to complete my misfortunes, He hath taken away my Blessing.* And Esau said unto his Father, *Hast thou not reserved a Blessing for me? Is all thy store of Blessings exhausted. Hast thou given away every thing to this supplanter, Jacob?*

Jacob? From thy wonted love to me, I little expected a total disinherition, to be deprived of every thing. And Isaac answered and said, Behold, I have made him thy Lord, and all his brethren have I given unto him for servants. And with Corn and Wine have I sustained him. And what shall I do now unto thee my Son? And Esau said, *Hast thou but one Blessing?* No, Jacob had properly but one great Blessing, and this could not be divided, or given to two.* *Bless me, even me also, O my Father!* And Esau lift up his voice and wept. And who is there that is not almost ready to weep with him? Who can read this pathetic story, without being greatly affected, and pitying the hapless Son, pleading, but to no purpose, with an overwise indulgent Father, for a share of his dying Blessing; Pleading for a reversal, or some mitigation of the hard sentence that was gone out against him? Moses, the writer of this moving Drama, could never have thought Esau an odious or a vicious character, when he has so feelingly here made him the subject of our pity

* The promise was made not to Seeds as of many; but as of one, to his Seed, which is Christ.—Galat. iii.

pity and compassion. Isaac, moved with the prayers and tears of Esau, then said, *All the Blessing I now can give thee, I will. Thy Blessing cannot be the fatness of the Earth, and the dew of Heaven. This I have already given to Jacob. Thy dwelling shall be off, or at a distance from the fatness of the Earth, and the dew of Heaven. Thou shalt possess a Country, Mount Seir or Edom, where thou must live by thy sword, by war and the chace, in a state of violence and hostility, encountering men and beasts, and thou shalt serve thy Brother. Nevertheless, a time shall come, that thou shalt break the yoke from off thy neck, and obtain dominion and independence.*

This partly happened in the days of Jehoram, King of Judah, about nine hundred years after, when Edom, it is said,* revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a King over themselves. The prophecy was also more fully accomplished in the time of Herod the great, who was an Edomite

* II. Kings, viii.

Edomite by paternal descent, and who possessed the dominion of Judah, at the birth of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ all superiority and difference between Jacob and Esau were to cease. In him all the nations of the earth were to be united and blessed. Ishmaelites and Isaacites, Edomites and Israelites, Greeks and Barbarians, Jews and Gentiles, were all to become one people in Jesus Christ.

You may observe, that I have given a sense to the Blessing of Esau, very different from that in our English translation. According to this translation, the first part of the Blessing of Esau, which is the main part of the whole, is nearly the same with that of Jacob ; *Thy dwelling shall be of the fatness of the Earth, and of the dew of Heaven from above.* But true criticism must revolt at such a sense. Such fatness or fertility of land seems to be utterly inconsistent with Esau's situation among the barren mountains of Seir.

- And Esau hated Jacob because of the Blessing, wherewith his Father had blessed him. And

E

Esau

§ See Note at the end.

Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my Father are at hand; then will I slay my Brother.

Disappointment, jealousy, and rage now inflame the heart of Esau, and instigate him to avenge himself on his brother Jacob. This is the greatest blot in the character of Esau. But the manners of the times might somewhat seem to justify him. Where there was no regular policy, or established judges to settle injuries, men made no scruple of taking the matter on themselves, and becoming their own judges, and executioners on their enemies. Esau however, always treating Isaac with great respect, puts off the evil deed for the present, that he might not give anguish to an aged Parent, nor disturb the last days of his life, by filling the house with blood and distraction. It was a fortunate circumstance, that Esau put off the execution of his violent intentions, to the death of his father. It is always an advantage gained upon an enraged man, if we can

can but prevail upon him to delay the execution of his revenge. Time will cool the passion, and give room for reason and consideration, which may shew him the rashness, and wickedness of his resolution. And therefore the wise man saith;* *The discretion of a man deferreth his anger.* At the same time the threatened party hath time to guard himself, to counteract his enemy, to remove out of the way, to pacify him by submission, or presents, or set him right in some misconceptions, or prejudices he hath taken. This deferring of wrath had a happy effect with respect to Esau and Jacob. Though Esau in the first transports of his passion vowed vengeance on Jacob, and said he would kill him, after the death of Isaac; yet I think there is reason to believe, from his other good qualities, that when his passion was cooled a little, he would hardly have proceeded to the fatal deed. And the kind reception he afterwards gave his Brother;

* Prov. XIX.

ther justifies this conclusion. The words and threatenings of Esau soon reached the ears of Rebecca. And she, in great fright, immediately sends for Jacob, saying ; *Behold thy Brother doth comfort himself as touching thee, purposing to kill thee. Now, therefore, obey my voice : Arise, and flee thou to Laban, my Brother, at Haran. And tarry with him a few days, until thy Brother's fury be turned away ; until thy Brother's anger turn away from thee. Then will I send, and fetch thee from thence.* But, alas ! she never lived to fetch him from thence. Instead of a few days, Jacob continued at Padan - Haran twenty years, and Rebecca had never the comfort of seeing her son again. Poor, restless, distressed good woman, no sooner got out of one difficulty, but involved in another ! Well might she say as she doth, on another occasion : *I am weary of my life. What good shall my life do me ?* No time was now to be lost. Jacob was sensible of the danger that threatened him. He readily listened to his Mother's advice ; and was sent away privately,

ly, that Esau might not know of it, and way-lay him. He was sent away in haste, without servant or attendant, without Camel or Ass, with only his knapsack on his back, and his staff in his hand, on a journey of 450 miles, to Haran, in Mesopotamia.— Could one think that such a naked, destitute, young man, who the first night was forced to make the earth his bed, a stone his pillow, and the Vault of the Heavens his Canopy, was heir to such mighty promises, and carried such blessings on his head? But the Providence of God accompanied him, and protected him in all his ways. And except the few wrong steps he took, chiefly at the suggestion of his Mother, in deceiving his Father, and circumventing his Brother, he was a most excellent man; just, honourable, constant, fervent in his devotions, and particularly zealous for the worship of one true God, amidst nations of Idolaters. His virtues and abilities soon recommended him to the favour of Laban, who in time married his daughters to him, and

and admitted him into partnership in the profit and management of his herds and flocks. Whatever he took in hand, the Lord made it to prosper. And now having wives and children, and a numerous household, with large flocks and herds of all kinds of cattle, he was desirous, after a twenty years absence, to return again to his own country, and visit the land, to which by the promise of God he thought himself, and his descendants entitled.

Jacob, after his first day's journey on his going to Padan - Haran, vowed a vow, saying, *If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and him, and him only will I for ever serve, worship, honour, and adore.* And now God Almighty had performed his part of the covenant—had brought him back in peace to the borders of Canaan, and had not only given him bread to eat, and raiment

raiment to put on, but moreover had blessed him with great riches and plenty. And Jacob was not now wanting in rememb'ring, and performing his part of the vow and covenant. When on his safe return, he approached the borders of the Jordan, and took a survey of all his household and substance, compared his former destitute condition, with his present affluent state—considered what a happy change there now was in his circumstances—that twenty years before he had crossed that river, a poor destitute fugitive traveller, with only his knapsack on his back, and his staff in his hand, and was now become two large troops of people and cattle. Full of humility and thankfulness to God, he burst out into the following ejaculation, and said,*

'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant. For with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Lo, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.'

* Gen. XXXII.

Lord. He that now goeth on his way weeping, as Jacob did, bearing forth good seed, the principles of piety and virtue in him, shall come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.

Some doubt and danger however still occurred to him. Although he had now been absent twenty years, he was apprehensive that his Brother Esau might still retain his resentment. His first care therefore is to sound the disposition of his Brother, and pacify his anger, by an humble submission, and the offer of very considerable presents. He therefore sent messengers unto his Brother Esau, saying, *Unto the land of Seir, and country of Edom,* like a vassal to his chief;* Thus shall ye speak to my Lord Esau: *Thy servant Jacob saith, I have sojourned with Laban, and staid there until now. And I have Oxen and Asses, and Flocks, and Men-servants, and Maid-servants; and I have sent to tell my Lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.* To this message Esau seemed to return a doubtful,

* Gen. XXXII. 3.

ful, equivocal answer. For all that the messengers reported back was, *We came to thy Brother Esau; and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.*

Jacob, at receiving this ambiguous answer, was greatly afraid and distressed. Why should Esau come to meet him with so great a force? Was Esau a Prince so considerable, as to have four hundred men to attend him, as his usual guard? Or did he march with this large body out of pride and ostentation, to shew Jacob how great a man he was, notwithstanding his Father and Brother had deprived him of his Birth-right and Blessing? And that he had force enough to make good his claim to the land of Canaan? Or did Esau mean this body of men, as an honourable escorte, and guard to his Brother, and as a force to enable him to make good his quarters, and secure an establishment among the petty States of Canaan? Or did Esau come out with this force, which was a very great one for a *Prince* in those days of so

many petty Sovereignties, with a full design to attack Jacob, and with hopes, by slaying Jacob, of succeeding to the whole Family-inheritance and Blessing? If Esau meant good, why did he not express his meaning in good and friendly terms? Why send back the messengers with such a cold, perplexing, enigmatical answer? The expressions of love and friendship are always simple, open, and intelligible; while those of fraud and evil purposes are dark, involved, and ambiguous. Jacob therefore was greatly afraid. And his fears made him forebode the worst. And accordingly he provided against the danger, as well as he could, by dividing his people and flock into two bands, concluding, that if Esau came and smote one company, the other might probably be able to escape. And at the same time, not trusting in his own arm or help, he addressed himself unto God, and said; *O God of my Father Abraham, and God of my Father Isaac, deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my Brother, from the band of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and*

and smite me, with the Mother, and Children.
 The sun was risen, when Jacob departed from Peniel, and crossed the brook Jabbock, on the borders of the Jordan. *And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and saw, with a trembling heart, Esau coming, and four hundred men with him.*

Though Jacob, like a pious good man, applied unto God to turn the heart of Esau, I think, we may fairly conclude, his heart was turned already. By time and absence the anger was pacified, and the force of brotherhood prevailed: And at the first interview, Esau, having forgotten, or forgiven all injuries, received Jacob with the utmost tenderness and affection. When Jacob, according to the Eastern manner of approaching a Prince or Chief, bowed himself seven times to the ground, as he came near unto his Brother: Esau, waving all these ceremonies, ran to meet him, and embraced him, and *fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they both wept for joy.*

And

And when Esau saw the Women and Children, He said, *Who are those with thee?* Jacob replied, *They are the children, which God hath graciously given unto thy servant.* Jacob then severally presented all his Family to his Brother. Esau then asked, *What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?* Jacob answered, *These are intended as a present, in order to find grace in the sight of my Lord.* And Esau replied, *I have enough, my Brother. Keep that thou hast unto thyself.* How friendly and generous was this. Esau shews himself not to be actuated either by avarice or ambition. For when did avarice or ambition ever say they had *enough?* *I have enough, my Brother. Keep that thou hast unto thyself.* But Jacob urged him; *I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, receive my present at my hand.* For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, in as much as thou wast pleased with me. *Take, I pray thee, my Blessing, because God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have enough.* And he urged him, and he took it. And indeed

indeed to have refused the presents, after so much pressing, would have looked as if Esau was not heartily reconciled to him. Men do not chuse to receive favours, or to be beholding, to those whom they dislike. It is an argument of friendship and reconciliation to accept a kindness. Esau then said, *Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.* Jacob answered, *My Lord knoweth, that the children, and the flocks, and herds with young, are with me. I should only be a hindrance to my Lord; I must march on slowly. Let my Lord, I pray thee, pass on before thy servant, and I will lead on softly, until I come to my Lord, at Mount Seir.* Let me then, said Esau, leave some of my People with thee, to conduct and assist thee as a guard? And Jacob said, *What needeth it? The Lord hath hitherto, and still will be my Protector.* So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And thus the meeting of Esau and Jacob, which seemed to threaten so much danger, by the Providence of God, ended in mutual kindness and reconciliation: And the two Brothers

Brothers treated one another with all the ceremony of Princes, with all the complaisance of Gentlemen, with all the sincerity of friends, and with all the affection of Brothers.

Although Esau was master of so great a force, greatly superior to that of Jacob, and, humanly speaking, could easily have kept him off from his Father's house, and even from making any settlement in Canaan, yet he never offers now to oppose his Brother's succession, either to his Birth-right, or Blessing. The Birth-right he had all along given up, like an honourable and religious man, according to his bargain and oath. And he must long before this have been made sensible by his Parents, that the Blessing was to attend the Birth-right, and that by Divine appointment it had been transferred to Jacob.

Esau, it appears, had already, in some measure, quitted Canaan, agreeable to the will, and Isaac's entail of that land upon Jacob, and had seated himself in Mount Seir.

Here

Here Jacob said he would come to him.* And no doubt soon made him a visit, and in his way must of course have visited his Father Isaac at Mamre, near Hebron, in the South of Canaan, though the Scripture doth not mention it. For Isaac, though so aged and infirm at Jacob's departure, was still alive at his return. And Jacob in some time, after various movements, seated himself with Isaac, at Hebron, and took his aged Father, and all his household and substance, under his management and protection. And when Isaac died, the two Brothers very amicably and honourably performed the funeral obsequies to their Father. After this, Esau, in compliance with Divine appointment, *took his Wives, his Sons, and his Daughters, and all his Substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan, and went into the Country, Mount Seir, which is Edom, from the face of his Brother Jacob,* absolutely quitting all pretensions to Canaan, and leaving the whole succession open to Jacob, according to the*

Blessing

* Gen. XXXIII.

Blessing of Isaac;

—*Dios d' eteleieto Bonlæ.* And the will
of God was fulfilled.)

From this plain narrative, I think, Esau appears to be not an odious, but a respectable character. And yet he is generally treated both by Christian and Jewish writers, as an instance of irreligion and profaneness, as a reprobate, a monster in mind, as well as body. But the Holy Scriptures do not warrant us in holding any such opinion. It is said‡ ‘ Isaac loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob.’ But is it likely that Isaac would have loved Esau more than Jacob, if he had been so wicked and profane; such a monster in person or actions? It appears, that he was very obsequious and respectful to his Father, and particularly endeared himself to him, by his pains to serve and please him, by procuring and dressing dainty bits for his Father’s decayed appetite. It is said indeed,* *The Elder shall serve the Younger.* But this must

‡ Genesis XXV.—* Gen. XXV.

must be understood of the posterity of the two Sons. Esau did in his Descendants, but did not personally, serve his Brother. Esau in his life-time was never subject to Jacob. When Jacob returned from Padan-Aram, only as a rich Shepherd, or great Householder; Esau was a Sovereign Prince, and came out to meet his Brother with a troop of four hundred men. And with these, humanly speaking, he could have crushed Jacob in a moment. And Jacob made him costly presents, calling him Lord, and bowed himself seven times to the ground on approaching him, like a vassal at the feet of his Chief. Esau and his Sons were Princes, or Dukes in Edom, while Jacob and his Descendants were only Sojourners in the Land of Canaan, afterwards Slaves in Egypt four hundred and thirty years, and then poor afflicted wanderers forty years in the Wilderness of Arabia. So that the Blessing of Jacob was the reversion of Canaan only, after a term of near five hundred years.—Indeed *a thousand years are with God as one day,* who*

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* ii. Peter, iii.

*call eth those things that be not, as though they were.**

Although it be said, *the Elder shall serve the Younger*, as it is written, or as it is otherwise expressed, to the same purpose, in the first of Malachi, *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*; yet these words are applicable only to Rebecca in the first instance, who shewed so much partiality & difference between her Sons, that she might be said to doat on Jacob, and hate Esau. For this was not written, or spoken by God in Genesis, at the time of the Birth, or during the lives of the two Brothers. This was spoken by the Prophet Malachi, in his first Chapter, fifteen hundred years after. Although it be said *the Elder shall serve the Younger*, yet both were to be the Heads of two considerable people. *Two nations are in thy womb, says the Oracle of God to Rebecca; and two manner of People shall be separated from thy bowels.*† *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.*‡ God does not chuse from fancy or caprice, but he chose the house of

* IV. Romans.

† Gen. XXV.—‡ XV Acts.

Jacob, as fore-knowing it would better answer the ends of his Providence. But this Pre-election, or predilection of Jacob, was not for any personal fault of Esau. ' For, as St. Paul saith,* *When Rebecca had conceived by one, even by our Father Isaac, it was said, the Elder shall serve the Younger.* But this could not be for any personal sin of Esau, or superior acts of virtue in Jacob. For the children not being yet born, nor having done any good or evil, could not then have given ground for such preference. But this shews, that the election of one to be a chosen seed before the other, was a matter of absolute choice, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of the Free-will of him that calleth.'

God by his prophet Malachi is arguing with his people, telling them what peculiar kindness he had shewed them; and how ungratefully they had returned it. *I have loved you,* saith the

the Lord. *Wherein hast thou loved us,* replies Israel. The Lord answers; *was not Esau Jacob's Brother?* Equally related to their grand Father Abraham, to whom the promise was made? Lawfully begotten of the same Father and Mother, Isaac and Rebecca? And had he not naturally equal pretensions with Jacob to my Blessing? Nay, had he not a prior and superior claim, by being the eldest? Yet Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated. That is, Jacob's family have I chosen, and you his Descendants to be my favourite people, in preference to those of Esau. God is supposed here to *hate Esau*, only comparatively speaking, as loving him much less than Jacob, as conferring all the advantages of primogeniture, and the blessing on the younger, and as making the elder to serve the younger. For really, or incomparatively speaking, God did not hate Jacob. The Author to the Hebrews says,*

* By faith Isaac blessed both Esau and Jacob concerning

concerning things to come.' And the blessing of Isaac was the blessing of God. Esau then was blessed of God. And so far from hating Esau or his Descendants, the Lord prospered them, in the land of Edom; and drove out, or subjugated the Horites, the ancient inhabitants, and descendants of Seir. And when the children of Israel were advancing towards Canaan, and conquering all before them, and were arrived at Mount Seir, the Lord commanded them not to meddle with their *Brethren, the Children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir: For I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot-breadth; because I have given Mount Sier to Esau for a possession.* Esau have I hated, but Jacob have I loved,* only means then that the elder should be less respected than the younger. For Esau and his Descendants were really prospered, and blessed by God, as we have already seen, though in a much less degree than

* Exodus II.

than the Family of Jacob.) *Minus love, less love,* is put for positive hatred.

It is said indeed in xii Hebrews, *Looking diligently, lest there be any Fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his Birth-rights.** But this is not calling Esau either a Fornicator, or a Profane person. Esau is only mentioned here as an example to enforce, and teach us spiritual

* If *Pornos* be taken in an idolatrous sense, as it often is, and *Fornicator* and *Profane Person* mean Idolater, and Heathen, or Infidel; Esau was none of these. He must firmly have believed, in the Promise of the Blessing made by God to his Fathers; otherwise he would not have been so earnest to have obtained it, nor so much grieved for the loss of it.

The Jews say to Jesus, John viii: *We are not born of Fornication, we are not Idolaters; We have one Father, even God. A Bastard shall not enter into the Congregation of the Lord.* Deut. xxiii. A Bastard was *bebælos, a Profane Person.*

— Procul, O, procul este Profani.
Virg. Æn. vi.

ritual things, by natural or temporal. As Esau very indiscreetly sold his Birth-right, the succession to his Father for a trifle, for a momentary relief of appetite ; so Christians should learn from his example, not to sell or forfeit their Birth-right to an inheritance of their Heavenly Father, for the sake of any trifling gratification of their present appetites or passions. Esau's selling his Birth-right was an act of extremity, not of choice ; an act of folly, not of sin. He sold it, not as despising it, but because he thought he was dying, and should not live to enjoy it. He sold it in a moment of impatience, when his spirits were sinking, when a man is ready to cry out, *I would give any thing, I would give the world for a morsel or a draught.* In this transaction, the sale of the Birth-right, I think, we may rather blame Jacob than Esau. Ought not a good Brother immediately have given to a Twin-brother, just returned from the field, where he had been hunting for Provisions for the Family, exhausted with hunger and fatigue, melting with heat, and ready to perish for want of some immediate refreshment ;

refreshment; ought not a good Brother immediately have offered him any thing in his power? Should Jacob, in such a situation, have made any delays, have dodged with a hungry belly, have insisted on unreasonable grants and concessions from a fainting Brother, before he would let him have a morsel to strengthen him, or a cordial to comfort him? Should Jacob have tantalised him with the ready prepared mess before his eyes, and then taken advantage of his necessity, and not suffered him to have a taste of it, till he had formally sold him his Birth-right, and confirmed the sale by oath?

Valuable as Jacob appears to be in all the future acts of his life, his behaviour in the case before us seems cruel and unnatural. Esau was very sensible of the value of the Birth-right, and afterwards called his Brother a *supplanter*, for having, as he thought, tricked him out of it. Neither can Esau with any justice be called a *fornicator*. He took indeed two Canaanites to his bed, but he

he took them in the lawful wedlock of the times. And did not Judah, the head of the most favourite tribe, the tribe that Christ descended from, did not Judah marry a Canaanite? And Esau, when he found this alliance was disagreeable to his Parents, took to wife Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, of the line of Abraham.* *Looking diligently, lest there be any Fornicator, or profane Person,* as Esau, implies not, that Esau was such, but only means, as may be shewn, or as may be exemplified by Esau, *who for one morsel of meat sold his Birth-right.* This, as I said before, is not calling Esau either a fornicator, or a profane person. Esau is only mentioned here as an example, to enforce, and teach us spiritual things by temporal. The words *Pornos* and *Bebælos* Fornicator or Profane, are applied by the Apostle, not to Esau, but to the fornicating, profane, corrupt, ungodly Christian. As Esau very indiscreetly for a momentary relief of appetite sold his Birth-right; so Christians should learn from his example, not to sell or forfeit

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* Gen. xxviii.

their Birth-right to an inheritance of their Heavenly Father, for the sake of any present gratifications of their ungodly lusts or appetites. *For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected. For he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears!* It is very true, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; but by whom was he rejected? Not by God, as a reprobate, abandoned sinner, unworthy of mercy and forgiveness, whose repentance came too late, but he was rejected by his own Father Isaac. With him he found no place of repentance. Esau could not prevail on Isaac his Father to repent, or change the Blessing he had pronounced upon Jacob, though he sought it carefully with tears, though he urged his Father with all the moving arguments of intreaty, of remonstrance, of grief, pity, and lamentation. *I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed;* saith Isaac firmly, conclusively.

It does not at all appear by this then, that
Esau

Esau was reprobated by God, as a fornicator or profane person, or that all his cries and tears and repentance were ineffectual as to God's mercy, or his own future Salvation. A reversal of the great Blessing was what he sought. And in this Isaac rejected him. The law was a shadow of good things to come.* Transactions in the Old Testament adumbrate those of the New: And the Apostle makes use of the case of Esau only as a moral, or lesson of instruction to Christians. As Esau with all his cries and tears could find no place of repentance, could not move his earthly Father Isaac, to reverse the Blessing, or change his doom; so means the Apostle to teach us, that Christians may possibly fall into such damnable sins, into such a reprobate state of wickedness and corruption, as to find no room for repentance, no change of doom with their Heavenly Father: That it will be in vain to knock, when the door is shut; too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of vengeance.

Having

* Heb. X,

Having made this apology for Esau, it may be necessary, perhaps, that I should make some apology for myself, for having so long detained,* I wish I could say, entertained, you.

* The Preacher was one hour and fifty minutes in the Delivery of the Sermon. For this he may plead a Precedent in a Venerable Relation, John Alcock, Bishop of Ely, Founder of Jesus College in Cambridge, and Lord High Chancellor of England in the Time of Henry VII; Qui bonum et blandum Sermonem præduavit in Ecclesia Beatae Mariae Cantabrig; Qui incepit in hora prima post Meridiem, et duravit in horam tertiam, et ultra: Who preached a good and loving Sermon at St. Mary's, in Cambridge, which began at one of the Clock in the Afternoon, and continued until three o'Clock, and longer. See Warton on ancient English Poets.



§ *The Fatness of the Earth, and the Dew of Heaven from above*, and consequent *plenty of Corn and Wine*, are descriptive of the fertile Land of Canaan, as was before mentioned, and had already been given to Jacob. I would suppose the negative *Lo, not*, to have preceded *jjeh* in the original Text, and by some mistake to have been left out by Transcribers. *Thy Dwelling shall not be of the Fatness of the Earth. Thou shalt not live by plenty of Corn and Wine. But by thy Sword shalt thou live.* Probably some manuscripts may confirm this conjecture; or if this conjecture be too bold, for we ought to be cautious of admitting conjectural criticisms, and no manuscripts can be found to justify it; then I say, by an Ellipsis not uncommon in Hebrew, another mem in its negative Sense may be understood to be prefixed to *mishmane*, which is also not uncommon, especially when the next Substantive connected with it has the mem prefixed, as it hath *here*. And then the sense will be, *Thy Dwelling shall be off, from, or removed from, or be in want of the Fatness of the Earth, and the Dew of Heaven from above.* If we suppose the Substantive here to be *Shemen, Fatness, the Negative*

mem

mem is then expressed as in CIX Psalm, *My Flesh emaciatur, is dried up, Mishmen a pinguedine, for want of Fatness.*

In an excellent Edition of the Hebrew Psalter, published by Ant. Hulse, Professor of Hebrew, at Breda, 1650, the Editor remarks, that there is a double use, or contrary Sense of the prefix mem in the 23d verse of this CIX Psalm. My knees are weak *mitzom præ jejunio, ob nimeum jejunoum*, through too much fasting. And on the contrary, my flesh is dried up, mishmen, *non præ pinguedine, vel ob nimium pinguedinem, hoc enim absurdum esset, sed a pinguedine, a defectu pinguadinis.* However, if none of these criticisms be admitted, my apology for Esau will not be weakened, but rather strengthened, as our present Translation makes Esau, not reprobated, but very highly blessed by his Father.

F I N I S.
2 NO 66

ERRATA.

Page 1, Line 3, *dele and.*

3, —— 4 from bottom, *for bleamable read blamable.*
7, —— 1, *note, for mean, read main.*
8, *same note, for Petræ, read Petrea.*
16, *for signifying, read signifies—and the third line from the bottom, f. Erythras, r. Erythros*
19, —— 1, *for Volante, read Volente.*
21, —— 14, *for disingenous, read disingenuous.*
31, —— 2, *note, for his, read thy.*
37, —— 6 from the bottom, *insert and after fervent. and in the last line insert some before time.*
40, —— 15, *dele saying, and insert saying in the next line before like.*
62, —— 9, *note, for jejunoum, read jejunium. Line 11, read nimiam for nimiam. ellet, for eſſ et. In the next line r, pinguedinis, f. pinguadinis.*

2 NO 66

H. Soames
July 28 1794
his Book
